Rome Scala Dante
4th January 1878

My dear Tom

I was grieved to hear that you been very ill, but that you have recovered & can go up & down stairs again – In this you beat me inasmuch as I have no stairs for all my house is one floor /

Writing often is difficult with only as all writing is rather irksome to me; but also as I had much to do for the memory of dear Keats & I assure you my memory has been very handy taxed but it has come up to the mark & it is a pleasure to me that I can now remember almost every incident of my life long as it is & varied by such ups & downs

And yet I won't complain, for though I may envy you in your dear wife Emma, Maria your sister & your very dear girls; yet I can assure you that I am very comfortable, in every thing

but the longing for dear family & my brothers
& sister, my children (now only 4) & my dear dear
24 grandchildren, to be about me or at least some
of them

But my ray of sunshine daughter Eleanor
with her husband lately paid me a short visit for a
fortnight which was very charming for she
twisted him round her little finger as they say and
as he speaks Italian well her visit has left a
very pleasant impression on our memories, (I
say ours for Dr. Valeriani & his wife enter into
all my doings & consult my well being in every thing
in this I am lucky as things go, for the Romans
are a bad set of liars thieves & idle vagabonds

Latterly the King has played them a pretty
piece of business - Wanting to build a new city
on the eastern waste ground & seeing sure that
he could never do it with the lazy Romans he
at once imported a 100 thousand Lombardy good
hard working men, & the new city has sprung
up

in the most wonderful manner & it is a treat to see these men work like Englishmen

The last feat was to cut thro' Monte Cavallo (the Quirinal) which was a very hard task for there were 4 layers of house brickwork & the Roman cement being hard like stone, the task has been a severe one but is done & now the fine houses are rising all along it to join with the fine old city - In the meantime the Romans outwitted take to thieving, but the Police is so good & active that all going on, a change must take place in the Roman character - There are some 20 or 30 arrested every day (

Best 2 fear it may end badly for the English people have ceased to visit Rome which is caused by the avarice of the Romans whose charges were so enormous that the visitors no longer come, & the Romans having gained great sums of money are now spending it all in making new hotels of which there are some 29 all nearly empty

too long in the house I get cross & stuffy
for I am not yet at my painting, my strength
is not quite up to it, but I am not all
at all thind down